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CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF CLERKS AND ELECTION OFFICIALS

GAIL L. PELLERIN, PRESIDENT

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March 14, 2011

The Honorable Jerry Brown
Governor, State of California
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: County Central Committee and County Council Elections for Political Parties

Dear Governor Brown,

As elected and appointed county government officials responsible for the administration of elections in the State of California, the California Association of Clerks and Election Officials (CACEO) recognizes the unprecedented nature of the current fiscal crisis. In looking for ways to reduce our costs, and thus save taxpayer dollars, we believe that county central committee and county council elections for political parties should no longer be conducted at taxpayer expense.

As you know, county central committees are non-public offices, comprised of members of political parties involved in party fundraising and candidate endorsement activities. County elections officials have been required to conduct elections for these non-public offices in all direct primary elections for decades, at expense to county general funds. These are the only elections for non-public offices conducted at taxpayer expense. Our budgets and taxpayers can no longer afford to conduct these elections. Here are the facts:

- Taxpayers pay an estimated \$7.5 million statewide to cover the cost of conducting county central committee and county council elections at each direct primary election;
- County central committee and county council candidates comprise nearly 50% of the total number of candidates who file for all elected offices. These offices have nomination signature requirements that must be verified, ballot designations to be validated, and paperwork to be completed and filed, resulting in the need for additional staff to serve these candidates;
- Most voters are unfamiliar with county central committee and county council candidates. Up to 76% of all voters in a primary election fail to cast any votes for county central committee and county council candidates; and
- County central committees and county councils are voted on exclusively by voters affiliated with the corresponding political party. Now that California has a "Top Two Primary" system, ballots will no longer be printed by political party (except for the nomination of President, in Presidential election years). If county central committees and county council contests remain on the ballot, separate ballots will be required and two separate elections will need to be conducted concurrently, adding to the costs to the counties' general funds.

At a time when we are faced with cutting services to our most vulnerable populations, conducting elections for political parties is a cost that California taxpayers can no longer afford. It is time to amend State law to allow county central committees and county councils to select their members by caucus. County elections officials could help stimulate interest and educate voters about political party caucuses by printing notices in the county Sample Ballot and Voter Information Pamphlet mailed to each voter prior to the election.

As President of CACEO, I urge you to support changing the law to save taxpayers millions of dollars and provide for a more efficient election administration process. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gail L. Pellerin".

Gail L. Pellerin, President
California Association of
Clerks and Election Officials

cc: Honorable Debra Bowen, Secretary of State
Honorable Darrell Steinberg, Senate President Pro Tem
Honorable John A. Pérez, Assembly Speaker
Honorable Robert D. Dutton, Senate Minority Leader
Honorable Connie Conway, Assembly Minority Leader
Gareth Elliott, Legal Affairs Secretary to the Governor
Barry S. Brokaw, Sacramento Advocates, Inc.